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FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

PROGRAM Sunday Morning STATION WDMV TV  
CBS Network

DATE March 28, 1982 10:00 AM CITY Washington, DC

SUBJECT Frank Snepp

BRUCE MORTON: Frank Snepp once worked for the Central Intelligence Agency in Vietnam. For the record, he'd previously worked as a researcher for CBS News. But it was his time with the CIA in Vietnam which shaped his life. He wrote a book about what he and the agency did there. But the Supreme Court, in a ruling some people think dented the First Amendment, think Snepp should not have written anything without CIA clearance, and that he must pay the government his book royalties, which were substantial.

Eric Enberg has more.

ERIC ENBERG: On this winter night at a small Midwestern college, a spy comes in from the cold, briefly, to talk about a losing war that for him has never ended.

FRANK SNEPP: One February morning in 1978, a journalist called me at my Arlington apartment to give me some chilling news. The government, he said, was suing me for a book I'd written about my former employer, the CIA, even though nobody had accused me of packing any secrets between its covers.

Well, two years later, after debilitating legal battle, the Supreme Court rendered final verdict in my case, handing down a ruling that did as much damage to the First Amendment as it did to me.

ENBERG: Frank Snepp had written his expose, "Decent Interval," in the white heat of anger over the evacuation of Saigon. His bosses, he claimed, had bungled. Secrets and secret agents had been compromised.